

**FORWARD MOVEMENT:
ENDING AND PREVENTING
HOMELESSNESS IN
CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG**

A PROGRESS REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

OCTOBER 2014

MESSAGE FROM MIKE RIZER, FORMER CHAIR OF CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG COALITION FOR HOUSING (2010-2014)



In 2006, the City of Charlotte, at the urging of the US Interagency on Homelessness, created a “10-Year Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness.” However, the Plan largely lay dormant for over three years. In 2010, the City and Mecklenburg County demonstrated laudable leadership and collaboration in creating a joint advisory board called the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Coalition for Housing. Its objective is to help drive awareness, resources and a unifying strategy for affordable housing and homelessness efforts in the community.

Much has been accomplished over the last four years, including:

1. Creating the \$20 million “A Way Home” housing endowment, which will provide critical funding to assist families in moving from homelessness to sustainable housing;
2. Creating and funding the Mecklenburg County Housing Stability Partnership, which includes Mecklenburg County, the City of Charlotte and the Charlotte Housing Authority;
3. Establishing a Coordinated Assessment system which will drive effectiveness and efficiency in serving our homeless neighbors;
4. Creating a central information system that will allow data-driven goals and accurate measurement of the goals;
5. Placing over 500 chronically homeless individuals in permanent housing in an 18th month period, demonstrating that ending chronic homelessness in our community is within our grasp; and
6. Approval of over 900 affordable housing units serving households earning 60 percent or less of the area median income

We should all be proud to live in a community in which the business, faith and philanthropic sectors are engaged in solving the complex issues around housing affordability and supportive services. The stories that follow bear out that commitment.

If you take away just one message from this report, I hope it is this: homelessness can be solved. Indeed, it is being solved. But it requires continued focus, resources and political will.

MORE THAN SHELTER

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's 10-Year Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness

OVERARCHING GOALS

GOAL 1: HOUSING:

Get homeless families and individuals into appropriate and safe permanent housing as soon as possible.

GOAL 2: OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT:

Link those who are chronically homeless to housing, treatment and services through intensive outreach and engagement.

GOAL 3: PREVENTION:

Promote housing stability for those families and individuals most at-risk of becoming homeless.

CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG COALITION FOR HOUSING MEMBERS

Ken Szymanski, Current Chairman
Mike Rizer, Chairman 2010-2014
Dennis Boothe, Jr.
Brian Collier*
Nancy Crown
Brandon Lofton
Stacy Lowry*
Nicole Martin
Michael Marsicano
Josie Mazzaferro
A. Fulton Meachum, Jr.*
Patrick Mumford*
Josef Penner
Rabbi Judith Shindler**
Melanie Sizemore
Annabelle Suddreth
Lori Thomas

*ex-officio

**served on board through June 2014



MILESTONES



2010

CMCH established as a committee of the City of Charlotte

Urban Ministry Center completed vulnerability study to better understand chronic homeless population

Salvation Army began housing families at Hampton Creste

Crisis Assistance Ministry launched the on-line Benefits Assessment (formerly Benefit Bank)

Urban Ministry Center completed study to show cost effectiveness of housing chronically homeless individuals

Crisis Assistance Ministry piloted Phase I of a targeted homeless prevention program

2010

2011

WISH, Charlotte Emergency Housing and Family Promise merged to become Charlotte Family Housing

Uptown Men's Shelter and Emergency Winter Shelter merged to become Men's Shelter of Charlotte

Supportive Housing Communities expanded McCreech Place to serve an additional 27 chronically homeless men

Crisis Assistance Ministry piloted Phase II of a targeted homeless prevention program

Alexander Youth Network opened Journey Place for aging out foster youth

Mecklenburg County Homeless Resource Center opened for faith groups to serve evening and weekend meals to homeless

Samaritan House expanded from 6 to 12 beds for medical respite

2011



2012

Salvation Army launched its Rapid Rehousing program for homeless families

Website that allows people to volunteer easily to serve the homeless was developed

Urban Ministry Center opened Moore Place and expanded its Scattered Site Housing Program to house chronically homeless men and women

Rescue Mission opened its new 90-bed Doves Nest for women in recovery

Souls of Our Neighbors premiered to educate community about affordable housing myths

2012

2013

Providers shifted from Bell Data to CHIN in order to participate in statewide homeless database

Local 100,000 Homes Campaign launched to house chronic homeless

Mecklenburg County launched MeckFUSE with the Urban Ministry Center to house frequent users of homeless and criminal justice systems

Charlotte City Council and Foundation For The Carolinas forged partnership to establish a \$20 million endowment (A Way Home) for targeted prevention and rental assistance for at-risk and homeless families, with veteran families a priority

Safe Alliance opened new 80-bed shelter for victims of domestic violence

Mecklenburg County Board of Commission approved \$1.3 million to provide supportive services to match with housing subsidies for homeless families and chronically homeless men and women

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police created a two-man unit to focus on outreach to homeless in Uptown



Crisis Assistance Ministry rolled out its refined targeted prevention program post pilots

UNC Charlotte Urban Institute created Homeless and Housing Data Consortium

Supportive Housing Communities launched its scattered site housing program for chronically homeless individuals and families



2014

Carolina CARE and Supportive Housing Communities expanded supportive housing to chronically homeless families through the Housing Stability Partnership

Crisis Assistance Ministry launched its Relocation Service (formally Casseroles and Beyond pilot) for homeless people

Coordinated Assessment System designed and launched through support of United Way, Wells Fargo, and Foundation For The Carolinas

First Data Day held at UNC-Charlotte that shared housing data and trends in community

Community Link, Family Endeavors, ABCCM and Alston Wilkes Society began providing housing assistance to homeless and other low-income veteran families through federal SSVF grants

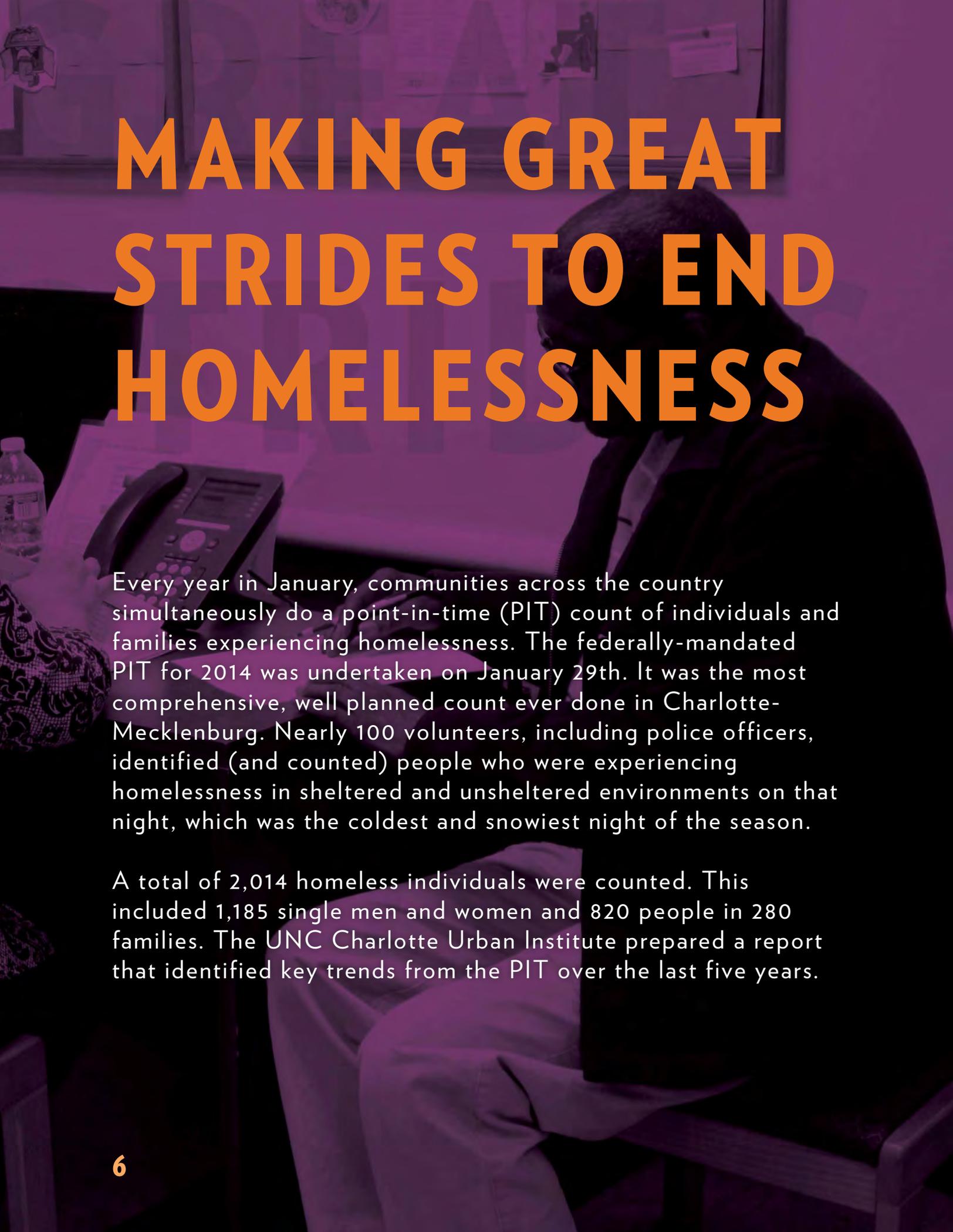
Salvation Army raising funds to increase emergency beds for women and children at Center for Hope

First A Way Home Housing Endowment grants awarded for start-up of targeted prevention and housing assistance to homeless and at-risk families



2013

2014



MAKING GREAT STRIDES TO END HOMELESSNESS

Every year in January, communities across the country simultaneously do a point-in-time (PIT) count of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The federally-mandated PIT for 2014 was undertaken on January 29th. It was the most comprehensive, well planned count ever done in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Nearly 100 volunteers, including police officers, identified (and counted) people who were experiencing homelessness in sheltered and unsheltered environments on that night, which was the coldest and snowiest night of the season.

A total of 2,014 homeless individuals were counted. This included 1,185 single men and women and 820 people in 280 families. The UNC Charlotte Urban Institute prepared a report that identified key trends from the PIT over the last five years.

BETWEEN 2009-2014

THE GOOD NEWS

- 19% reduction in overall homelessness
- 40% reduction in number of homeless individuals
- 23% reduction in chronically homeless
- 10% reduction in homeless veterans

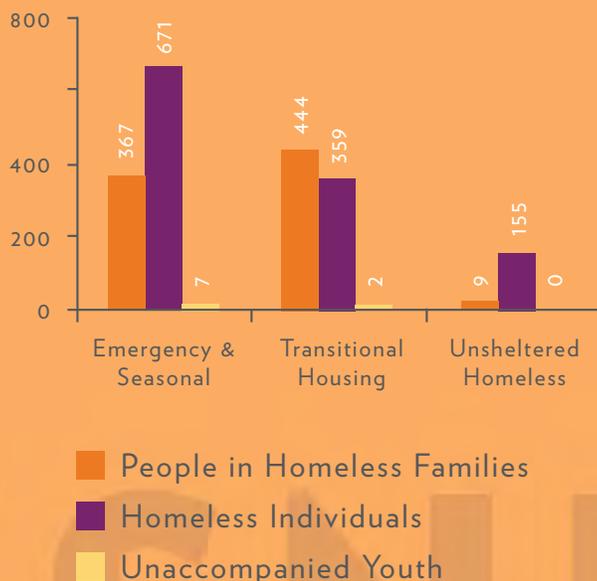
A BIG CHALLENGE

- 57% increase in family homelessness (but 27% reduction since 2013)

Go to <http://ui.uncc.edu/story/charlotte-mecklenburg-point-time-count-report-2009-2014> for the complete study.

HOMELESS FAMILIES AND SHELTER TYPE

(2014)



SUCCESS IN HOUSING THE CHRONICALLY HOMELESS

100,000 HOMES CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's homeless service providers and advocates have rallied to support the 100,000 Homes Campaign — a national initiative launched four years ago to help communities around the country place 100,000 chronically homeless people into permanent supportive housing. Charlotte-Mecklenburg joined the campaign in 2013, and since then, 549 people in 442 homeless households were placed into housing. Many of those housed had been living on the streets for extended or repeated periods and, in many cases, had a mental disability, a physical illness, a drug or alcohol addiction or a combination of the three. A number of homeless veterans have been housed through this campaign.

Follow the campaign at www.100khomes.org

With their great success to date and continued support from the community, local providers are on course to end chronic homelessness in Charlotte by 2016.

“HOUSING FIRST” MODEL WORKING

One of the primary reasons Charlotte-Mecklenburg is making tremendous headway in ending chronic homelessness is the community’s embrace of the “housing first” model. A nationally recognized best practice, the housing first model is now being employed in a number of local efforts designed to house those who have experienced chronic homelessness. It’s an approach that centers on providing people experiencing homelessness with housing as quickly as possible – and then providing services as needed.

MOORE PLACE

The Urban Ministry Center (UMC) opened its 85 unit Moore Place in 2012 providing housing and wraparound services to chronically homeless adults. It’s the first permanent supportive housing development in Charlotte that follows the “housing first” model. Plans are underway to add 35 more units to the development.



MOORE PLACE: A COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP

- City of Charlotte: Housing Trust Fund Dollars
- Mecklenburg County: Support Service Dollars
- Charlotte Housing Authority: Project Based Rent Vouchers
- Mecklenburg Ministry: Developer/Operator



Phyllis was the first resident to move into Moore Place in 2012. She was homeless for four years before moving into Moore Place in February 2012. Phyllis was living on the streets of Charlotte in precarious health, with several untreated chronic health conditions. One of these conditions was advanced diabetes; without housing, she had no place to store and refrigerate necessary diabetes medication. Since moving into Moore Place, Phyllis has taken control of her health and is no longer cycling in and out of the emergency room. Her hospital bills decreased by 70 percent in just the first year of housing. She also had reestablished a relationship with her son and spent countless hours with her grandson.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING COMMUNITIES (FORMALLY ST. PETER’S HOMES)

Supportive Housing Communities continues to increase options for those who are chronically homeless. In February 2011, another 27 efficiency units were added to McCreesh Place – Charlotte’s first Single Room Occupancy (SRO) development—increasing the number to 91.

Then in March 2014, the organization launched a pilot program to provide chronically homeless individuals and families with scattered site rental housing connected with support services. The scattered site housing program currently can accommodate 14 individuals and 24 families.



Robert has been living at McCreesh Place since 2010. Once homeless and living on the streets in Charleston for five years, Robert is now sober, safe and engaged to be married. He says, “Life is on track!”

Those targeted for the program are among the most challenged in the homeless population: they typically aren't working, don't have marketable jobs skills and may never be able to hold a job because they are physically or mentally disabled. Plans are underway to serve an additional five individuals and four families by the end of 2014.

MECKFUSE

A new County-funded housing program was launched in 2013 for homeless men and women with health issues who have been frequent users of Mecklenburg's jail, street camps and shelters. Operated by Urban Ministry Center, the program provides rental subsidies and support services for 45 men and women.



Urban Ministry Center staff help a proud resident move into his own apartment through support of MeckFUSE.

MeckFUSE received a Corporation for Supportive Housing Program of the Year Award in 2014.

MEN'S SHELTER OF CHARLOTTE

The Men's Shelter of Charlotte has dramatically stepped up its efforts to move men out of the shelter and into appropriate housing.

In 2013, the Shelter helped place 288 homeless men in housing. Through June 2014, an additional 495 men were housed. Many of these individuals were chronically homeless. Shelter staff have worked closely with other agencies and area landlords to find appropriate housing for men who previously may have had lengthy stays at the shelter.



PROOF: PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING IS WORTH THE INVESTMENT!

Five years ago, the idea of moving chronically homeless men and women into supportive housing apartments to save the community money and reduce recidivism was met with great skepticism in Charlotte. However, a recent study of Moore Place conducted by UNC Charlotte's Department of Social Work, Charlotte's first permanent supportive apartment complex, provides proof that the concept works.

According to the study, Moore Place saved the community \$1.8 million in its first year by drastically reducing the amount of time its tenants spent in emergency rooms (447 fewer visits) and admitted to hospitals (372 fewer days). Statistics show tenants experienced a 78 percent drop in arrests and 84 percent fewer days spent in jail.

POLICE UNIT DEPLOYED TO FOCUS ON CHRONICALLY HOMELESS IN UPTOWN

In 2013, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department dedicated two police officers to work alongside homeless service providers in reaching out to homeless men and women sleeping in camps, below overpasses or on the steps of churches in the center city and connecting them to available resources. These officers walk a delicate line between enforcing the law and getting help for some of the city's most vulnerable people. Homeless service providers view the officers as active partners in trying to address the problem of homelessness in a proactive, supportive way.

HOUSING HOMELESS FAMILIES: MEETING THE GROWING CHALLENGE

\$20 MILLION PUBLIC/PRIVATE ENDOWMENT LAUNCHED

Hope is on the way! In 2013, the City of Charlotte and Foundation For The Carolinas (FFTC) partnered to create the innovative A Way Home (AWH) Housing Endowment. The City has committed \$10 million (\$2 million over five years), and FFTC is raising \$10 million from private philanthropy to establish this permanent source of funding. When this public/private endowment is fully funded over the next several years, it will generate an estimated \$950,000 annually in interest and other earnings that will be used to assist approximately 180 families each year. AWH dollars will fund two types of support: 1) targeted prevention intended to help stabilize families at-risk of homelessness in their current housing (up to three months of financial assistance and case management) and 2) rental assistance with case management for homeless families (up to two years of support to move families toward unsubsidized housing.)

FFTC and various houses of faith are providing start-up funds to launch AWH programming at a smaller scale in fall 2014. Crisis Assistance Ministry, Charlotte Family Housing and Salvation Army collectively were awarded \$125,000 for the first year of housing support. Mecklenburg County Community Support Services dollars were also awarded to fund supportive services for families served by Charlotte Family Housing and Salvation Army, thus leveraging AWH rental assistance dollars.

A WAY HOME HOUSING ENDOWMENT

- For at-risk and homeless families earning 50% or less of area median income
- Families with returning veterans will be given priority
- Goal is to move families into scattered rental units in areas with limited affordable housing
- Families must be referred through the local Coordinated Assessment System



MECKLENBURG COUNTY COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES DOLLARS

In 2013, Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners approved \$1.3 million to be spent over three years to fund much needed case management support for rapidly re-housing homeless families with children and chronically homeless individuals or families. The County's intent is that the funds be matched with rental subsidies that the families and individuals have received through A Way Home and other community housing programs.

AGENCIES AWARDED COUNTY SUPPORT SERVICES FUNDS TO DATE

- Urban Ministry Center
- Salvation Army
- Supportive Housing Communities
- Carolina Care Partnership
- Charlotte Family Housing

91%

**OF CFH'S FAMILIES WHO HAVE
GRADUATED FROM THE AGENCY'S
HOUSING PROGRAM HAVE
SUCCESSFULLY MAINTAINED
PERMANENT HOUSING
WITHOUT SUBSIDIES!**

CHARLOTTE FAMILY HOUSING GETS RESULTS WITH HOUSING HOMELESS FAMILIES

In 2011, three programs that served homeless families (Workforce Initiative for Supportive Housing (W.I.S.H.), Charlotte Emergency Housing and Family Promise) merged to become Charlotte Family Housing (CFH.) Since the merger, CFH has served 455 families and helped 316 of them obtain housing. The organization operates three family shelter sites and focuses on a shelter-to-housing model, which is based on a deep belief in building on a family's strengths and capabilities to move toward self-sufficiency and lasting change.

Empowerment and accountability are foundational to CFH's work with families. When advancing from shelter to housing, CFH families receive rental subsidies and wraparound support. This support includes Hope Teams consisting of three to six volunteers from the faith community and/or organizations who are trained and matched with families to provide consistent support and encouragement. The vast majority of families served by CFH are headed by single working moms with an average of two children.

CFH SHELTER SITES

Plaza Place: shelter for 15 families

Elizabeth House: shelter for 4 families

Hawthorne Place (located in St. John's Baptist church): shelter for 6 families

HOUSING HOMELESS FAMILIES: A SALVATION ARMY PRIORITY

The Salvation Army's Center for Hope has been over capacity most nights for the past several years, as an increasing number of families—both single moms with children and intact families—have been seeking shelter there. Moving families into housing to address the overflow at the shelter is a solution the agency actively began pursuing in 2010 with the launch of the Supportive Housing Innovative Partnership (SHIP; formerly known as Hampton Creste.) In partnership with Charlotte Housing Authority, Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services, area congregations and others, Salvation Army piloted this transitional housing program that provides short-term (3-6 months) rental assistance and supportive services for 60 families at a time at Hampton Creste Apartments. Since the inception of SHIP, 160 families were housed within three years or less. Of these families, 85 percent retained permanent housing.

In 2012, the Salvation Army started its Rapid Rehousing program that places homeless families in rental units scattered within the community. This new program uses a progressive engagement model with the "lightest touch" for services and subsidy. A total of 222 families have been housed through this program through the end of October 2014, with 87 percent not returning to the shelter.

Since October 2013, Community Link served approximately

200

Mecklenburg County veteran families through its SSVF grant; of these, approximately **68** have been housed.



Wanda came to the Salvation Army Center of Hope with her son after being evicted from her apartment for non-payment of rent. Being homeless was not new. Wanda had grown up and aged out of the foster care system. She describes her decision to come into the shelter as one of desperation.

After several weeks in the shelter, Wanda moved into rapid rehousing offered through the Salvation Army and was working a full-time job at a fast food restaurant. However, it did not provide enough income for Wanda to sustain her family long-term. She continued to seek better employment and eventually was offered a position at Mecklenburg County's Sheriff's Office. This new opportunity has increased her income capacity by more than 50 percent and will allow her to be self-reliant in affordable housing and not return to homelessness.



SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR VETERAN FAMILIES GRANTS RECEIVED

In 2014, four regional and state-wide nonprofits received federal funding through the Support Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) grant program that is enabling them to provide homeless prevention and stabilization services to very low-income veteran families in multiple NC counties, including Mecklenburg. In total, \$5.36 million were awarded to these organizations in 2014, and those same funds were renewed for 2015.

Through SSVF funds, eligible veteran families who are on the verge of homelessness or are already homeless receive assistance for rent and utility payments, as well as for security deposits and support services.

SSVF GRANT RECIPIENTS SERVING MECKLENBURG VETERAN FAMILIES

- Alston Wilkes Society (Columbia SC)
- Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry (Asheville)
- Community Link (Charlotte)
- Family Endeavors (Charlotte)

MORE SUPPORT FOR POPULATIONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

DOVES NEST

More women struggling with addiction in Charlotte can now be served as a result of the Charlotte Rescue Mission's new Doves Nest facility that opened in 2012. The 90-bed residential treatment facility replaced the 12-bed facility that had operated in Dilworth for many years. Because of the larger space, addicted mothers now have the option to bring their children with them during their treatment. In addition to opening Dove's Nest, Charlotte Rescue Mission recently remodeled its center for men who are participating in the Rebound recovery program.

CLYDE AND ETHEL DICKSON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (DV) SHELTER

For over 30 years, only 29 beds were available in Charlotte-Mecklenburg for women experiencing domestic violence and in need of safe shelter. That all changed in early 2013 when Safe Alliance opened its new 80-bed DV shelter. The new, modern shelter accommodates single women and women with children in both emergency and transitional units. Although it doesn't meet the full community demand, the new shelter is a great win for the community and the women and families it serves.

JOURNEY PLACE

Young men aging out of foster care (18-21-year-olds) now have a place to live and develop independent living skills as they make their transition to independent adulthood. Journey Place, developed and managed by Alexander Youth Network, opened in 2011. It can accommodate six young men for up to 18 months in a group home setting. Residents are given the opportunity to practice the required independent living skills necessary to be successful adults while in a safe and supportive environment.

SAMARITAN HOUSE

Being homeless can be a major challenge for men and women recovering from an illness or medical procedure. In the last several years, new options for a safe and caring place for recuperation following hospital discharge have become available in Charlotte. Samaritan House moved to a larger space in 2011, increasing its ability to serve 12 individuals needing a place to recuperate. These beds add to the 10 respite beds currently available at the medical respite wing of the Men's Shelter of Charlotte.

NEW RESOURCES FOR HOMELESS PREVENTION

ON-LINE BENEFITS ASSESSMENT (FORMERLY BENEFIT BANK®) LAUNCHED IN CHARLOTTE

Charlotteans now have an easier way to access job and other government support thanks to the counselor-assisted, On-line Benefits Assessment. This one-stop service is comprised of a web-based program that helps people complete federal and state tax returns and government forms in order to apply for a range of benefits and services such as Medicare and Medicaid, nutrition services, childcare subsidies and prescription assistance. Initially launched in 2010 with the support of various local foundations and corporate sponsors, the On-line Benefits Assessment is managed by Crisis Assistance Ministry in Charlotte, which is the primary Benefits Assessment site. Additional sites are located throughout the community.

TARGETED PREVENTION PROGRAM PILOTED AT CRISIS ASSISTANCE MINISTRY

In addition to providing emergency housing and utility assistance to residents at imminent risk of losing their housing or having their utilities terminated, Crisis Assistance Ministry has been providing deeper prevention support for some families since 2010. The agency saw the need to provide this deeper support as a means of increasing families' chances of attaining long-term housing success. Two phases of prevention-focused programming were piloted between 2010 and 2012 (Padlock Prevention and Partners in Prevention.) These pilot programs led to the launch of the agency's current Targeted Prevention program in 2013. Targeted Prevention is designed to provide short-term (up to three months) rental and other financial assistance, plus case management and financial counseling support for families living in an unstable housing situation. Families are identified for Targeted Prevention from the more than 600 households who seek help weekly from Crisis Assistance Ministry. Thirty-two families were served through Targeted Prevention in 2013.

SYSTEMS CHANGE TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES

A BIG WIN: COORDINATED ASSESSMENT LAUNCHED IN 2014

After several years of discussing the merits of developing a coordinated intake and assessment system to more efficiently connect homeless individuals and families to housing and shelter resources, Charlotte-Mecklenburg's homeless service providers now have such a system in place. United Way of Central Carolinas led the community process to design and implement the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Coordinated Assessment system, thanks to \$200,000 in seed funding from Wells Fargo, a smaller grant from HUD, and support from the Foundation For The Carolinas. Consultants from the National Alliance to End Homelessness were commissioned to work with local service providers to develop and tailor a system that would work in Charlotte.

The new system, which launched in May 2014, provides a single portal of entry for all who are homeless and seeking assistance. Experienced social workers from Mecklenburg County Community Support Services and the Men's Shelter of Charlotte are housed in four agencies where homeless or at-risk individuals are uniformly assessed and directed to the best resource available for their situations.

Coordinated Assessment Sites

- Salvation Army Center of Hope
- Crisis Assistance Ministry
- Men's Shelter of Charlotte
- Urban Ministry Center

BETTER DATA TO INFORM DECISION MAKING

Through a Catalyst grant from Foundation For The Carolinas and additional funding from Mecklenburg County, the groundwork for building the Affordable Housing and Homelessness Data Consortium has been realized as a first step in addressing the gap in community knowledge concerning homelessness and affordable housing. The Data Consortium will be part of an integrated community data repository at UNC Charlotte Urban Institute and managed by the Institute for Social Capital, Inc. Local homeless and housing providers' data imported into the Data Consortium will be used to generate homelessness and housing forecasting and trend analysis reports. Those reports may also incorporate other socioeconomic data to depict needs (i.e., housing) in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area.

Additionally, the Data Consortium will provide researchers access to community-level data on affordable housing and homelessness for academic and applied research reports. Overall, the Affordable Housing and Homelessness Data Consortium will allow the community to have access to an integrated database that will enhance data-driven policy decisions on affordable housing issues and efforts to end homelessness.

CALL FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

When, after seven years, the Charlotte Housing Authority opened up its wait list for Housing Choice Vouchers in September 2014, over 10,000 people signed up on the first day. This astonishing number underscores the critical need for affordable housing in Charlotte. A recent study conducted for the City of Charlotte indicates that in 2012, a deficit of 15,301 rental units existed in Mecklenburg County for people earning 30 percent or less of the area median income. This deficit is projected to grow to over 19,000 by 2015. The dearth of housing for this segment of our community often forces households to pay more than they can afford for housing or, to end up living in motels, double up with family or friends or move into shelters.

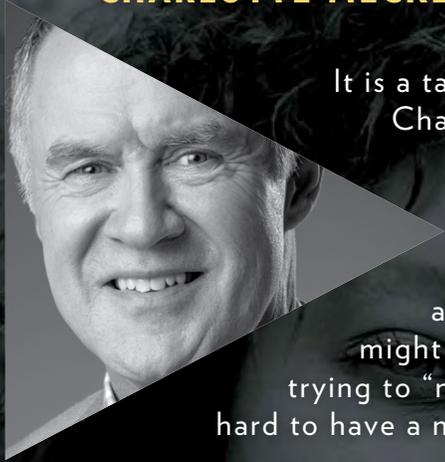
A number of mixed-income housing developments have been built in recent years with the assistance of various federal, state and City-funded programs. While helpful, these new affordable units, many that replaced older public housing units, have made only a small dent in addressing the need. Several affordable housing developments have been proposed in areas that currently lack affordable units for teaching assistants, service workers and others who are not making living wages. But due to strong neighborhood opposition, the developments have failed to gain approval. One that was recently approved in South Charlotte is pending due to a lawsuit filed by surrounding neighbors. The connection between homelessness and affordable housing is clear. Without additional affordable units, many residents of our community will continue to pay more than they can afford for their housing, and some will inevitably become another homeless statistic.

SOULS OF OUR NEIGHBORS: EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY ON THE FEARS, FACTS AND MYTHS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Increasing community understanding and awareness of the myths and realities of affordable housing and the people who benefit from it was the focus of *Souls of Our Neighbors*, a documentary sponsored by Mecklenburg Ministries, Crossroads Charlotte and Temple Beth El. This 28-minute documentary premiered at the crowd-filled Knight Theater in Jan 2012 and was subsequently shown and stimulated conversation at a February 2012 interfaith summit on affordable housing and homelessness. Numerous houses of faith also showed the documentary and engaged their congregations in conversations about the subject. In total, well over 1,000 people saw and discussed the film.

To view an excerpt from the documentary, go to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBMZ79dO7oY>

LOOKING AHEAD: MESSAGE FROM KEN SZYMANSKI, CHAIR OF CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG COALITION FOR HOUSING



It is a tall order to deter and even eliminate homelessness in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, but it's one that we're making considerable progress on via some remarkable and inspiring community groups and networks. In a community where 150,000 persons live below the Poverty Line, that's a lot of at-risk households who are a paycheck away - or an unfortunate incident away - from being without housing. It might be next week, next month, or next year, but the realities of trying to "make it" when one is disabled or unemployed are daunting. It's hard to have a nice day when you're homeless.

That's why the many knowledgeable homeless advocates in our community cite the need to get people permanently housed as the first and foremost important step to household stability. Everyone needs and deserves housing; the specter of kids trying to cope and grow up without it is should disturb everybody. The problem is that, at the low end of the housing marketplace (especially the bottom 15%), private-sector housing does not exist for low-wage employees, and housing subsidy dollars are finite. In response to this, we've been fortunate to see a surge in non-traditional sources of money to support housing, including the local faith community and the philanthropic community. But the resources don't match the need.

As a community, we're blessed with some outstanding thinkers and organizations that have the talent, resolve, and focus to zero in on our homelessness problems. Deserving a great deal of credit are all the member entities of the Homeless Services Network - they are on the front lines of service. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Coalition for Housing is poised and positioned to advocate for our vulnerable individuals and families households and supporting our network of providers by alerting our elected bodies about sensible courses of action, calling for even better community cooperation and coordination, identifying and responding to special needs populations, reaching out to the business community and appealing to the community conscience about the unacceptability of homelessness.

I believe we in Charlotte-Mecklenburg do an outstanding job of rapid homelessness response. My wish going forward is that in the next several years the CMCH, Homeless Services Network and all community partners will do an even better job of predicting which households might fall into homelessness. For example: what happens to evicted households when they don't have sufficient resources to reside elsewhere? To the extent that such information could be useful for community efforts to rehouse people or prevent homelessness, we ought to find out.

It is honor to serve as the Coalition chair.



*“Housing means freedom.
Housing means feeling like
a real human being. Housing
means having a key to open
the doors to your “own” home.
Housing brought me close to
my family again.”*

- Carl Frank Caldwell, Moore Place Tenant

PREPARED BY CAROL MORRIS

FOUNDATION FOR
THE CAROLINAS

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